

health approach" in trying to keep the city safe. Under this idea, police officers could be employed if necessary. Well, the American voters have news for the people who got this initiative on the ballot in Minneapolis: Police officers are absolutely necessary in Minneapolis, and they are necessary in every other community as well.

Another example. In Austin, TX, voters will have a chance to restore funding for their police force—funding that the city council slashed a great deal last year.

The murder rate in Austin is higher than it has ever been. So far, 71 people have been killed in Austin, passing the previous record of 59 murders set all the way back in 1984. And with 71 murders, we still have 2 months left in this year, if you want to compare it to all the murders that took place in 1984, a previous high.

Some Austin voters have had enough of this sort of thinking, and they are trying to restore some common sense there in Austin. Under the Proposition A ballot initiative, the city would have to maintain at least 2 police officers for every 1,000 residents, which is more than they have at the present time.

But not everybody likes that, and liberal dark money groups have pumped a half million dollars into defeating this Proposition A because they want to keep defunded police still defunded.

Those same groups recently subsidized the campaigns of hard-left district attorneys all throughout the country. That includes the San Francisco district attorney, who has let drug and property crimes skyrocket. San Francisco is now getting hammered with out-of-control drug use, and shoplifting there happens to be a way of life.

That isn't CHUCK GRASSLEY saying that; that is anybody watching television who sees pictures of people just going into stores and just picking up whatever they want. In one city, if it is under \$950, you won't be prosecuted. So it is a license to shoplift.

I hope Austin, TX, voters will make sure that their city doesn't go the same way. I would like to think they would want to be safe from criminals and the drugs that criminals push.

Liberal politicians are no longer saying it out loud, "defund the police." But make no mistake about it, many of them still want to defund police.

If Minneapolis and Austin let their police forces wither away on the vine, voters all across the Nation and all across the political spectrum will send a very clear message to the hard left in the next election. So voters everywhere should stand up and say no to defunding the police.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, last week, a Tennessee director of schools named Russell sent me an email about a problem he is having with some of his students. The so-called devious lick TikTok trend caught on in his district, and it is more than just a viral gag. The idea behind this devious lick TikTok trend is to destroy school property and document it on TikTok so that all the world can see—the more violent, the better.

Here is how Russell described what is going on in his schools:

In Cleveland City Schools, we have seen fire extinguishers stolen, mirrors removed from walls, a toilet was removed from its foundation, and multiple other acts of vandalism. I know of stories from other school districts, where even more serious types of vandalism and theft have taken place.

He went on to tell me that this trend has caused thousands of dollars in damage, and that he has had to resort to threatening suspensions, court citations and other actions to deter students from demolishing school property—all from a TikTok video trend.

I want to state for the record that this is absolutely insane. This is not normal teenage behavior. It is criminal activity, and these kids are posting it online thinking that they are building social media clout.

TikTok banned the trending hashtag, but last night, it took a member of my staff about 10 seconds to unearth posts featuring students trashing their school bathrooms.

Russell is at a loss as to how to get his students to stop body slamming doors off their hinges, and so are thousands of parents all across Tennessee who are wondering how it is even possible that a tech company is getting away with encouraging criminal behavior in its underage users.

They want more than just an apology and a tweak to an algorithm. They are looking for accountability, and I am happy to say that we at the Senate Commerce Committee are working to get that accountability from these Big Tech companies.

The issue of Big Tech's toxic influence on children and teens is finally getting some much-needed bipartisan attention from the Senate. Earlier this month, I hosted a hearing in the Commerce Committee's Consumer Protection Subcommittee with Chairman BLUMENTHAL, where we examined Facebook's role in promoting content to teenagers that drove young users into spirals of despair, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts.

Now, our ideas about what Congress should do to force accountability into the equation might differ a bit, but maybe for the first time ever, the relationship between Republicans and Democratic tech watchdogs in this Chamber is far less contentious than the relationship between Big Tech and Members of Congress. And, Madam

President, that is something worth noting.

If we keep this up, Silicon Valley, as they currently operate, is in for some big changes because, as much as I appreciate our role as lawmakers, I also believe in the importance of our ability to compel transparency from officials and companies that refuse to offer it up voluntarily. Sunlight is often a better disinfectant than legislation.

Fortunately, at least some players in tech are reading the writing on the wall. Tomorrow, representatives from YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok will testify before the Consumer Protection Subcommittee regarding safety protocols they have inserted between underage users and the seediest corners of the internet. Yes, I did say "underage users."

I want to thank them in advance for agreeing to appear because we are not going to take it easy on them. They should not expect a comfortable day. We have evidence that these platforms have endangered children and teens while collecting—yes, collecting—their personal data and leveraging it through the advertising side of their businesses. The danger is real.

As we were preparing for the hearing, my staff hopped on YouTube and searched for "how to slit your wrists," and the videos YouTube spit out—well, let's just say that any questions about how to do such a thing were answered in full, unfortunately.

Earlier this year, a 9-year-old boy in Memphis died trying to participate in a TikTok "strangulation challenge" that had gone viral.

And we know for a fact that child predators use Snapchat to troll for victims. This spring, law enforcement arrested a 48-year-old man for statutory rape after they caught him with a 16-year-old girl.

Where did he meet her?

On Snapchat.

We also have serious questions about data collection and disclosure policies and whether or not the market research tactics that are used by YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok are as invasive and dangerous as the ones that we now know Facebook uses.

As the saying goes, if the service is free, you are the product. And if we let them, tech companies will continue grooming our kids into accepting status as commodities and being their product, regardless of who it hurts.

Big Tech's relationship with children is a problem, but we also need adult tech enthusiasts to care about their own entanglements with these companies. We need everyone to care about how their own "virtual you" is harvested and sold to the highest bidder.

Many adult users believe that, because they have lived so much of their lives online, these things don't matter anymore. But, yes, indeed, it does matter, and I will give you just one example of why.

For a long time now, we have raised serious concerns about the connection

between TikTok and the Chinese Communist Party. We suspect, with very good reason, that ByteDance, which is TikTok's parent company, handed over biometrics and other sensitive user data to the Chinese Communist Party. This app has been Beijing's very best detective, a fact most users aren't aware of and don't want to give a second thought to.

Parents are completely unaware that TikTok is owned by ByteDance and that they are in cahoots with the Chinese Communist Party. Parents are unaware that the biometrics and other sensitive data of their precious children is now in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

Madam President, we just cannot afford to continue this. This one app on its own is a master class on artificial intelligence, machine learning, and facial recognition technology, and our most dangerous competitor is using it to corner the market on the world's most valuable commodity: the virtual you.

It is all part of Beijing's grand strategy to gain control over strategically important sectors of the global economy. Yes, indeed, they intend to be globally dominant by the time we get to the midpoint of the century; and, yes, indeed, they are an adversary.

We see them carrying out more of this agenda via the Belt and Road Initiative programs. And they are doing it online by training us to consume content that is so twisted that it drives young users to violence and to self-destructive behavior.

Interconnectivity has benefits and consequences, and, Madam President, it is an urgent need to take action against the consequences. We know from previous investigations that digital content is a weapon. It can damage self-esteem, destroy relationships, and tip the balance of global power in the wrong direction.

I hear from Tennesseans like Russell regularly. They will say: We saw this coming a mile away. We have watched this become a snowball rolling toward us.

They are appreciative that Congress has finally caught up to them—parents and teachers who are watching what is happening on social media—and they are ready for us to pull all those Big Tech skeletons out of the closet and put them on display.

I will say this: These teachers and parents are not people who are anti-innovation. They don't want to get in the way of private companies offering exciting new products. They appreciate interconnectivity, and they appreciate technology. But what they won't do is tolerate these companies—tolerate them trolling the data of our children, selling it as a product, and then turning around and weaponizing the content against us, the American people.

Big Tech needs to understand that we are not going to hold back, and it would be in their best interest to work with us on the issues of online privacy,

children's online privacy, data security, and make the virtual space a safe space.

Thank you, Madam President.
I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Parker nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Douglas L. Parker, of West Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Parker nomination?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 425 Ex.]

YEAS—50

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin | Hickenlooper | Portman |
| Bennet | Hirono | Reed |
| Blumenthal | Kaine | Rosen |
| Booker | Kelly | Sanders |
| Brown | King | Schatz |
| Cantwell | Klobuchar | Schumer |
| Cardin | Leahy | Shaheen |
| Carper | Luján | Sinema |
| Casey | Manchin | Smith |
| Collins | Markey | Stabenow |
| Coons | Menendez | Tester |
| Cortez Masto | Merkley | Van Hollen |
| Duckworth | Murphy | Warnock |
| Durbin | Murray | Warren |
| Gillibrand | Ossoff | Whitehouse |
| Hassan | Padilla | Wyden |
| Heinrich | Peters | |

NAYS—41

| | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Barrasso | Fischer | Paul |
| Blackburn | Graham | Risch |
| Blunt | Grassley | Romney |
| Boozman | Hagerty | Rubio |
| Braun | Hawley | Scott (FL) |
| Burr | Hyde-Smith | Scott (SC) |
| Capito | Johnson | Shelby |
| Cassidy | Kennedy | Sullivan |
| Cornyn | Lankford | Thune |
| Cotton | Lee | Tillis |
| Crapo | Lummis | Tuberville |
| Cruz | Marshall | Wicker |
| Daines | McConnell | Young |
| Ernst | Moran | |

NOT VOTING—9

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Cramer | Inhofe | Sasse |
| Feinstein | Murkowski | Toomey |
| Hoeben | Rounds | Warner |

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Perez nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Myrna Perez, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Perez nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be. There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 426 Ex.]

YEAS—48

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin | Hickenlooper | Peters |
| Bennet | Hirono | Reed |
| Blumenthal | Kaine | Rosen |
| Booker | Kelly | Sanders |
| Brown | King | Schatz |
| Cantwell | Klobuchar | Schumer |
| Cardin | Leahy | Shaheen |
| Carper | Luján | Sinema |
| Casey | Manchin | Smith |
| Coons | Markey | Stabenow |
| Cortez Masto | Menendez | Tester |
| Duckworth | Merkley | Van Hollen |
| Durbin | Murphy | Warnock |
| Gillibrand | Murray | Warren |
| Hassan | Ossoff | Whitehouse |
| Heinrich | Padilla | Wyden |

NAYS—43

| | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Barrasso | Daines | Marshall |
| Blackburn | Ernst | McConnell |
| Blunt | Fischer | Moran |
| Boozman | Graham | Paul |
| Braun | Grassley | Portman |
| Burr | Hagerty | Risch |
| Capito | Hawley | Romney |
| Cassidy | Hyde-Smith | Rubio |
| Cornyn | Johnson | Scott (FL) |
| Cotton | Kennedy | Scott (SC) |
| Crapo | Lankford | Shelby |
| Cruz | Lee | |
| | Lummis | |